

## HANDLING AND MOVING CATTLE

### 1. PURPOSE

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To illustrate safe practices when handling and moving cattle.

### 2. RESPONSIBILITY

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- 2.1 Trained and qualified staff.
- 2.2 Veterinarian

### 3. GENERAL

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- 3.1 Personnel must be knowledgeable in cattle behaviour and must only use low-stress techniques in the routine handling of cattle.
- 3.2 The main principles of low-stress handling are accommodating the animal's natural behaviours and motivations, reducing noise and other stressors in the environment, and ensuring handlers interact calmly and patiently with cattle.
- 3.3 Behavior and temperament are influenced by various factors mainly by genetics, human interaction, and environment.
- 3.4 Cattle are visual animals. They have a 300-degree range of vision. *Cattle have poor vision in front of them and a blind spot behind them.* Be aware of the area in front and to the side of the rear leg as they tend to kick forward and then back.
- 3.5 Cattle will mill or circle if frightened or distressed.
- 3.6 Their instinctive reaction to danger is to flee or fight, and therefore might charge or stampede.
- 3.7 When restraint is necessary the safest, least stressful restraint must be used.
- 3.8 Abusive handling PROHIBITED and will be NOT tolerated. Abusive handling includes, but is not limited to:
  - 3.8.1 Using loud noises to frighten or move cattle.
  - 3.8.2 Kicking, beating, striking, tail twisting, dragging
  - 3.8.3 Forcefully pulling cattle by the tail, head, and neck
  - 3.8.4 Improper use of a prod: Electric prods must not be used on calves.

#### \* NOTE:

Prods must only be used in extreme situations, such as when an animal's safety is at risk.

### 4. PROCEDURES

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- 4.1 Announce your presence when approaching the animal.
- 4.2 In an alleyway or chute system, cattle should be worked with in a head to tail sequence.
- 4.3 HANDLING AND MOVING CALVES:
  - 4.3.1 Handling:
    - 4.3.1.1 Stroke the calf under the chin or on the withers to encourage a submissive posture.
    - 4.3.1.2 Never stroke or pet them on the head. This may lead to butting.
    - 4.3.1.3 Calves should be handled and petted regularly.
  - 4.3.2 Moving:
    - 4.3.2.1 Several methods can be used to move a young calf:

- 4.3.2.1.1 Place it in a calf cart.
- 4.3.2.1.2 If not walking yet.: Place in a wheelbarrow. The assistance from an additional person is needed to prevent the calf from attempting to escape.
- 4.3.2.1.3 Lift and carry.
- 4.3.2.1.4 Push it forward gently to continue to walk.
- 4.3.2.2 When the animal is too big to use the methods listed in 4.3.2.1, a halter can be used to move it. [Refer to 4.4.2: Placing a halter.](#)

#### 4.4 HALTERING:

4.4.1 Unplug the electric trainers.

4.4.2 Placing a halter:

- 4.4.2.1 Always be attentive of the positioning of your fingers/ hands/ arms when haltering an animal in a stall/pen to prevent injury.
- 4.4.2.2 Do not lean over the head of an animal when haltering.
- 4.4.2.3 Always halter from the left side.
- 4.4.2.4 When using a rope halter:
  - 4.4.2.4.1 Loosen the rope.
  - 4.4.2.4.2 Place the top piece over and behind the ears first.
  - 4.4.2.4.3 Drop the loop over the nose.
  - 4.4.2.4.4 Tighten and adjust the halter, placing the nose piece halfway between the eyes and the nose.

4.4.3 Removing halter:

- 4.4.3.1 Wait until the animal's head is down and she is calm.
- 4.4.3.2 Loosen the halter under the chin.
- 4.4.3.3 Depending on the animal's head position and willingness to cooperate.
  - 4.4.3.3.1 Slide off the nose piece.
  - 4.4.3.3.2 Slip the halter over the ears while readjusting to avoid snagging and/or pulling out the ear tags.

#### 4.5 LEADING CATTLE WITH A HALTER:

- 4.5.1 Sprinkle grit as needed on the alley floors before moving cows to help prevent slipping.
- 4.5.2 Leading cattle should be done in teams of 2 when needed. The 2<sup>nd</sup> person assists the leader in the event trouble arises.
- 4.5.3 Always lead on the left side.
- 4.5.4 Never wrap the lead around your hand or your body.
- 4.5.5 Try to walk at the same pace as the animal and limit extensive lead ahead or behind you for better control. Do not let the animal lower her head, as much as possible.
- 4.5.6 If the animal refuses to move forward, give some slack on the lead to remove pressure on the halter. Be prepared to readjust your positioning with respect to the animal (ahead, behind) to ensure that the animal can keep a comfortable pace while moving forward.
- 4.5.7 If you are unable to control the animal or the animal charges forward, release the halter and seek assistance to address the situation.

#### 4.6 LEADING WITHOUT A HALTER: Animals are moved without a halter ONLY when:

- 4.6.1 moving to pasture as a group (Refer to section 4.8.5.1.2) by experienced staff OR,
- 4.6.2 habituated for exercise SOP [DC-360: Outdoor Exercise Habituation of Tie-Stall Cattle.](#)

#### 4.7 TYING CATTLE:

- 4.7.1 Always tie a slip knot.
- 4.7.2 Ensure the tie is short enough so that the animal cannot step over or become entangled in it but not so short so the animal cannot move its head.

#### 4.8 PASTURE:

- 4.8.1 Cows are always kept together in groups when left to graze in the pasture, never individually.
- 4.8.2 Cows with pasture experience:
- 4.8.3 Halter the animals to lead the animal to and from the pasture, if necessary. (Refer to section 4.4.2. Placing a Halter)
- 4.8.4 Cows and heifers new to pasture:
  - 4.8.4.1 Train in a small paddock with electrical fencing for a minimum of 2 hours prior to going to pasture:
    - 4.8.4.1.1 Halter the animal (refer to 4.4.2) and lead her to the training paddock.
    - 4.8.4.1.2 Training is complete once a few animals have been observed to touch the electric fencing, receive a light shock, and have calmed down.
- 4.8.5 Leading an individual animal to and from pasture:
  - 4.8.5.1 To pasture:
    - 4.8.5.1.1 Set up non-electrified wires to act as a laneway.
    - 4.8.5.1.2 Halter the animal (refer to 4.4.2) and lead to pasture.
  - 4.8.5.2 From pasture
    - 4.8.5.2.1 A nervous and uncooperative animal should be led back to the barn with one or two others, so she has the security of being in a group. (Refer to 4.7.6.2)
    - 4.8.5.2.2 Set up non-electrified wires to act as a laneway.
    - 4.8.5.2.3 Halter the animal (refer to 4.4.2) and lead directly to the barn.
- 4.8.6 Leading a group to and from pasture:
  - 4.8.6.1 To Pasture:
    - 4.8.6.1.1 Set up non-electrified wires to act as a laneway.
    - 4.8.6.1.2 In a team, lead the cattle to the pasture without being haltered:
  - 4.8.6.2 Returning from pasture to the barn:
    - 4.8.6.2.1 Set up non electrified wires to act as a laneway.
    - 4.8.6.2.2 Lead the group through the non-electrified wire lane (as per 4.7.6.1.2) and back to the small paddock where it's easier to catch.
    - 4.8.6.2.3 Halter the animal and lead to directly to the barn, when necessary. (Refer to section 4.4.2. Placing a Halter)

## 5. REFERENCES

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Woods, Jennifer B., "Livestock Handling and Behaviour" (August 2023). McGill University Macdonald Campus Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

National Farm Animal Care Council. Code of Practice for the care and handling of farm animal – Dairy Cattle. (2023). *Chapter 4.1 Handling, Moving, Restraining Animals*. <https://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/dairy-cattle/code#Section4>.

Dr. Temple Grandin's Website. Livestock Behaviour, Design of Facilities and Humane Slaughter. <http://www.grandin.com/>.

**HANDLING AND MOVING CATTLE****SOP REVISION HISTORY**

DATE	NEW VERSION
15-Jan-2021	Version 01: MacDonald Campus FACC approved
3-aug-2023	Version 02: MacDonald Campus FACC approved